

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-12

INFO OCT-01 ADP-00 PM-07 NSC-10 SS-15 RSC-01 CIAE-00

DODE-00 INR-10 NSAE-00 PA-03 USIA-15 PRS-01 OMB-01

AID-20 NIC-01 RSR-01 /098 W
----- 071667

R 131100Z AUG 73

FM AMCONSUL KARACHI

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 7446

INFO AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD

AMEMBASSY KABUL

AMCONSUL LAHORE

AMEMBASSY TEHRAN

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PINS, PK

SUBJECT: BALUCHISTAN -- PRESS REPORTS OF GOVERNOR'S VIEWS
SCORED AS "GARBLED AND MISLEADING"

REF: KARACHI 1303

BEGIN SUMMARY: STATEMENTS MADE BY GOVERNOR BUGTI
TO NEWSMEN AUGUST 9 WERE GIVEN GENERALLY ALARMIST
INTERPRETATION IN RELATED PRESS ACCOUNTS. SUBSEQUENTLY
OFFICIAL SPOKESMEN HAVE ATTEMPTED DAMP DOWN TENOR OF
HIS REMARKS BY DESCRIBING PRESS ACCOUNTS AS "GARBLED
AND MISLEADING". BUGTI HIMSELF HAS NOT COMMENTED
PUBLICLY ON PRESS ACCOUNTS, BUT GOP MINISTER STATED BUGTI,
WHEN QUERIED, CONCURRED THAT PRESS ACCOUNTS "GARBLED
AND MISLEADING". THERE NO INDICATION OVERALL POLITICAL
SITUATION IN PROVINCE IMPROVING AND MORE LIKELY HAS
DETERIORATED SOMEWHAT (REFTEL), BUT BUGTI'S TESTIMONY ON THIS
SCORE IS THAT OF PREJUDICED WITNESS AND, WHILE NOT TO BE
REJECTED OUT OF HAND, SHOULD CERTAINLY NOT BE ACCEPTED
UNCRITICALLY. END SUMMARY.

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1. KARACHI PAPERS ON AUGUST 10 AND 11 CARRIED ACCOUNTS OF MEETING AUGUST 9 IN QUETTA BETWEEN BALUCHISTAN GOVERNOR AKBAR BUGTI AND NEWSMEN. REPORTED THRUST OF GOVERNOR'S REMARKS WERE THAT SITUATION IN PROVINCE GOING FROM BAD TO WORSE AS DEMONSTRATED BY RECENT INCIDENTS WITH TROOPS AND TRIBALS KILLED IN ENCOUNTERS. GOVERNOR DESCRIBED SITUATION IN PROVINCE AS NOT RPT NOT LAW AND ORDER SITUATION BUT "INSURGENCY SITUATION" WITH POLITICAL MOTIVATION. IN ADDITION, GUERILLA ACTIVITIES IN PROVINCE SPREADING GEOGRAPHICALLY AND WHILE GUERILLA RANKS BEING AFFECTED BY DEFECTIONS MORE WERE JOINING AND TOTAL SIZE OF GROUP, NOW RPT NOW RANGING BETWEEN 3-6 THOUSAND, IS INCREASING IN SIZE. GOVERNOR PREDICTED GUERILLA ACTIVITIES WOULD INCREASE. AT SAME MEETING, BUGTI REPORTEDLY REFUTED NAP SPOKESMAN'S CHARGES THAT MILITARY HARASSING WOMEN AND CHILDREN AND DENIED THAT 30 PLUS MARRI TRIBESMEN DIED OF THIRST BECAUSE MILITARY DENIED THEM ACCESS TO WATER, SAYING THIS WAS DISTORTION OF INCIDENT IN WHICH MIXED TRIBAL GROUP, INCLUDING SOME BUGTIS DIED OF THIRST WHEN THEY LOST IN SANDSTORM WHILE PROCEEDING FROM KARACHI TO MAWAND IN MID-JUNE.

2. APPARENTLY KEYED TO ALARMING AUGUST 10 KARACHI DAWN ACCOUNTS OF GOVERNOR BUGTI'S AUGUST 9 REMARKS ENTITLED "GUERILLAS WILL STEP UP ACTION WARNS BUGTI", OFFICIAL SPOKESMAN IN QUETTA AUGUST 10 DESCRIBED PRESS REPORT OF GOVERNOR'S STATEMENT AS "DISTORTED, GARBLED AND MISLEADING." GOVERNOR'S EXPOSITION, DESCRIBED AS "CANDID", OBVIOUSLY MISUNDERSTOOD BY REPORTERS SINCE GOVERNOR "HAS UNFLINCHING FAITH IN DESTINY OF NATION AND HAS NO DOUBT FORCES OF NATIONAL CONSOLIDATION WILL TRIUMPH OVER FORCES OF DESTRUCTION AND SUBVERSION". SUBSEQUENTLY ON AUGUST 11 NEWLY ELECTED SPEAKER OF NATIONAL ASSEMBLY DEFERRED DISCUSSION OF ADMISSIBILITY OF TWO ADJOURNMENT MOTIONS INTRODUCED BY OPPOSITION MNA'S TO DISCUSS BUGTI'S STATEMENT ON CONDITIONS IN BALUCHISTAN. GOP INTERIOR MINISTER INFORMED THE HOUSE THAT BUGTI HAD BEEN CONTACTED AND DENIED STATEMENT ATTRIBUTED TO HIM AND HAD LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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DESCRIBED PRESS REPORT AS "GARBLED AND MISLEADING".

3. COMMENT: READING BETWEEN LINES IT APPEARS LIKELY THAT BUGTI DID PRESENT AN ALARMING VIEW OF BALUCHISTAN SITUATION AND THAT REPORTERS MAY NOT HAVE MISUNDERSTOOD OR GARBLED HIS COMMENTS. HOWEVER, SUBSEQUENT REACTION OF QUETTA OFFICIAL SPOKESMAN AND GOP INTERIOR MINISTER MAKE CLEAR THIS VIEW NOT SHARED UNIVERSALLY

IN GOP. BUGTI'S VIEWS PERHAPS COLORED BY TWO FACTORS: (1) HE HAS CONSISTENTLY ADVOCATED HARD-LINE AGAINST POLITICAL DISSIDENCE IN PROVINCE IN ORDER TO BOLSTER HIS DEGREE OF CONTROL AND (2) INAUGURATION OF NEW CONSTITUTION NIGHT OF AUGUST 13/14 MAY PRESAGE SOME CHANGES IN PROVINCIAL ADMINISTRATION OFFICIALDOM AND BUGTI, APPREHENSIVE THAT HE MAY BE INVOLVED IN A SHUFFLE, IS ATTEMPTING BUILD CASE FOR HIS RETENTION AS MAN CAPABLE OF MAINTAINING CONTROL IN BALUCHISTAN. THERE GENERAL AGREEMENT SITUATION IN PROVINCE NOT IMPROVING, BUT IT DIFFICULT TO ACCEPT AS RELIABLE BUGTI'S VIEW THAT CATAclysm IS APPROACHING BECAUSE HIS POSITION ANYTHING BUT THAT OF DISINTERESTED OBSERVER.

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: n/a
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 13 AUG 1973
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: garlanwa
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1973KARACH01452
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: N/A
Errors: N/A
Film Number: n/a
From: KARACHI
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1973/newtext/t19730842/aaaabeny.tel
Line Count: 129
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE
Office: ACTION NEA
Original Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 3
Previous Channel Indicators:
Previous Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: KARACHI 1303
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: garlanwa
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 12 DEC 2001
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <12-Dec-2001 by martinml>; APPROVED <18-Jan-2002 by garlanwa>
Review Markings:

Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
30 JUN 2005

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: BALUCHISTAN -- PRESS REPORTS OF GOVERNOR'S VIEWS SCORED AS "GARBLED AND MISLEADING"
TAGS: PINS, PK
To: STATE
Type: TE
Markings: Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 30 JUN 2005